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# Style Invitational Week 1497: The if-word

Give us a funny 'what if' scenario and result. Plus winning 'feghoots' – groaner-pun stories.



By Pat Myers

July 14, 2022 at 9:49 a.m. EDT



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post )

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**What if M.C. Escher had designed the entrance to the Philadelphia Museum of Art? Rocky would still be climbing those steps.** (*Jesse Frankovich, 2018*)

What if there were an alternate universe where your cat did not follow you to the bathroom? You'd just sit there and talk to yourself, I guess. (*Robyn Carlson, 2018*)

What if the 1972 Democratic Party headquarters had been in the Mayflower Hotel? Journalists would add “flower” to the end of any scandal: Iranflower, Whitewaterflower, Monicaflower, Flowersflower ... (*Jerry Pannullo, 1998*)

We last did this contest four years ago, but it's not as if we exhausted the pool of All the Situations and Events in the Whole World Ever. **This week: Give us a “what if” scenario and its humorous result**, as in the examples above from similar previous contests. Your entry doesn't necessarily have to begin with “what if,” if you have a funnier way to structure it. You know the Empress — it's all about the funny.

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Submit up to 25 entries at [wapo.st/enter-invite-1497](http://wapo.st/enter-invite-1497) (no capitals in the web address). Deadline is Monday night, July 25; results appear Aug. 14 in print, Aug. 11 online.

**Winner gets the [Clowning Achievement](#)**, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives an eensy blue triangle of fabric — smaller than the Empress's mini-size hand — that you'd think was a face mask, perhaps for a child — but is actually a **Brave Person brand men's**

perhaps for a child, but is actually a **BRAVE PERSON STAIN** men's **thong** swimsuit. We usually ask winners of garments — funny hats, socks, etc. — to send photos of themselves wearing them. This time we forbid it. Donated by Not So Brave Steve Smith. (Thank you, Amazon algorithm, which informed me: “Based on purchases by customers who wear your size, Large will fit you best.”) (Amazon founder Jeff Bezos owns The Washington Post.)

**Other runners-up** win their choice of our “[For Best Results, Pour Into Top End](#)” Loser Mug or our “[Whole Fools](#)” Grocery Bag. Honorable mentions get one of our [lusted-after Loser magnets](#), “A Small Jester of



Not a face mask. This week's second prize.

Appreciation” or “Close, but Ceci N’est Pas un Cigare.” First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” ([FirStink](#) for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at [wapo.st/inviteFAQ](http://wapo.st/inviteFAQ). The headline “Pun(ch)lines” is by Tom Witte; Chris Doyle and Kevin Dopart each submitted the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](https://on.fb.me/invdev); “like” the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at [bit.ly/inkofday](https://bit.ly/inkofday); and follow [@StyleInvite](https://twitter.com/StyleInvite) on Twitter.



## Van Gogh Exhibit in Washington

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**The Style Conversational:** The Empress’s weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. See this week’s, published late Thursday, July 14, at [wapo.st/conv1497](http://wapo.st/conv1497).

[And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago ...](#)



# Pun(ch)lines: Winning ‘feghoot’ tales from Week 1493

In [Week 1493](#) we asked for feghoots — absurdly contrived mini-stories that end in a wordplay on some phrase. The Empress puzzled through more than a thousand entries, and more than a few alleged punchlines left her brow so furrowed that her tiara tilted. Want to guess at some that didn’t get ink? See [this week’s Style Conversational](#) (published late Thursday, July 14).

## 4th place:

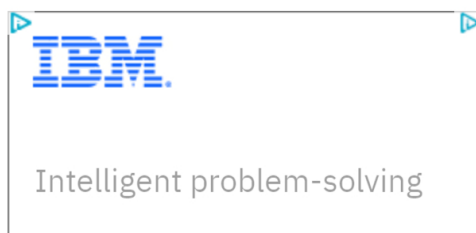
The famed Hollywood costume designer Edith Head suffered from a severe phobia of frogs. When she was assigned to a film starring Liam Neeson, little did she know that he’d bring his collection of pet amphibians to costume fittings, letting them jump around his dressing room. The headline in Variety: **“Head Shudders: ‘Neeson’s Toads! Neeson’s Toads!’ ”** (*Fran Ludman, Baltimore*)

## 3rd place:

My roommate Erica keeps borrowing my stuff without permission. Last week she took one of my combs, not realizing I had just used it to dye my hair purple. I’ll admit I laughed a little to see purple streaks show up in her hair — and if she doesn’t learn her lesson, I **may comb Erica grape again.** (*Hannah Seidel, Alexandria, Va.*)

## 2nd place

and the [What’s That Smell?](#) party game:







Many people know Harry Belafonte as a staunch Democrat, but few know of his deep grounding in Chicago-style politics. For decades, through the many mayoral administrations of father and son, he would celebrate each election night by standing outside Republican headquarters and singing his famous refrain: **“Daley come and we won. Go home!”** (*Karen Lambert, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

## And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:

Rex was a very stupid dog, except for one thing: he could play the kazoo. His owners exploited him shamelessly with several performances a day, but Rex just wagged his tail and kept tooting. Finally, the SPCA filed a complaint against his owners: **“The heels star a live witless hound of music.”** (*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

## Beaten to the punchline:

### Honorable mentions

As The Post’s aquatic-fashion critic, I have long bemoaned the lack of originality in men’s swimwear, and the trunks from the latest shows were so banal I wanted to scream. Alerting my editor about the review I was about to write, I texted: **“Damn the four Speedos! (full screed ahead)”** (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.*)



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BoJo held on for the longest time at 10 Downing St., but even his biggest Conservative Party supporters finally agreed to [\*\*stop heeding a dead Boris.\*\*](#) (*Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.*)

Many credit taxonomist Carl Linnaeus for biology’s binomial nomenclature, but few mention the Bauhin brothers, Gaspard and Johann. Without their work nearly two centuries earlier, Linnaeus would have been forced to develop his own governing system for naming species. One could say [\*\*it was the very model of the modern major genera.\*\*](#) (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

At a glitzy early 1980s Hollywood gathering, the hosts planned to announce the names of all the attendees, but couldn’t decide on the order. When one suggested that Mark Hamill should precede Yul Brynner, another was horrified: [\*\*“Luke before Yul? Eep!”\*\*](#) (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

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President Clinton hit on another intern, but this one set certain limits: **Clothes, but no cigar.** (*Chuck Smith, Woodbridge, Va.*)

A young father was changing his son’s diaper when suddenly the baby let forth a fountain of pee that arched high in the air and landed on the seat of the rocking chair. The father just smiled at him and said, “That’s okay, little guy — after all, **life is just a bowl of chair wees.**” (*Lee Graham, Rockville, Md.*)

Now that they’re in their own new house, Barack and Michelle can

Now that they're in their own new house, Barack and Michelle can finally decorate to their own tastes: **Sweet home, all Obama.** (*Jesse Rifkin, Arlington*)

To serve a summons on the ex-president, Merrick Garland sent agents to Fifth Avenue, Bedminster and Mar-a-Lago, vowing, **"I'll subpoena you in all the old familial places."** (*Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.*)

Scientists have long known that talking kindly or cruelly to plants can affect their growth. In fact, speaking too harshly to a potato can make it shrivel and die — yes, it's possible **to kill tubers with one's tone.** (*Coleman Glenn, Huntingdon Valley, Pa.*)



A priest was seriously overburdened in his busy parish, as he had no other clergymen to assist him. So he began to delegate tasks to his congregation. As he often said: **"When life gives you laymen, make laymen aid."** (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

The Trump Organization tried launching a worldwide tour for "The Big Interregnum of the Once and Future Prez," featuring both Beatles music and MAGA conspiracies. But no part of the world agreed to this nonsense. As a relieved Paul McCartney said: **"Isn't it good no region would?"** (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

My friend has had to replace both her knees. But the world of electronic wonders has invaded the orthopedics field: Each of her implanted joints has a sensor that tells her when she should get off her feet and go to bed. Yes: **The knees that say "night"!** (*Ted Remington, Marion, N.C.*)



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Guido the Brooklyn Pirate buried his pearl-filled chest in a grotto. To frighten off treasure hunters, he summoned a spirit named Victor from the deep, and commanded it to haunt the cave. As the apparition dematerialized, Guido bid it farewell: **“Toodle, Victah, ghost da poils!”** (*Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park, Md.*)

Back in the 1970s, African tyrant Idi Amin learned that the United States was about to supply Israel with advanced missiles. Amin contacted Henry Kissinger, asking that similar weaponry be supplied to his country as well. When Kissinger responded that Israel was a staunch strategic ally and Amin was not, Amin insisted, **“What’s good for the Jews is good for Uganda.”** (*Michael Rosen, New York*)

In a scene cut from “Casablanca,” Rick and Ilsa discover some birds that German officers have trained to overhear and recite back secret conversations between Resistance members. The two former lovers must neutralize these avian eavesdroppers, but they can’t decide whether to use a dagger, a hatchet or a machete. Finally they determine that the specific method doesn’t really matter. As Rick says to Ilsa, **“Well, all ways halve parrots.”** (*Karen Lambert*)



A sea lion wandered into a new pickling plant in La Jolla being dedicated by California's senior senator. Flopping along, he clumsily nudged her over a railing and into a vat of brine. Charged with assaulting a member of Congress, he protested that she wasn't in the vat long enough to suffer harm. To which the DA replied, **"You pickled Feinstein, believe me, loose seal."** (Bob Kruger, Rockville, Md.)

The Bengals needed only to stop the Rams one more time to win the Super Bowl. But with just seconds left on the board, the Rams overwhelmed Cincinnati's defense to take the lead and the Lombardi Trophy. A disgruntled Bengals fan cried out: **"At long last, have you no D, Cincy?"** (Mark Raffman)

A man spent his last savings to go see the legendary singing fish of a remote Alaskan river. Every day he rose at dawn, hiked to the river and waited for the famed Chinook — eight hours. Nothing. His last morning, the pilot returned to take him back to civilization. He told his story, heartbroken. The pilot sighed. "Nobody told you? **Salmon chant at evening!**" (Michael Stein, Arlington, Va.)

After rocketing to fame with "Jesus Christ Superstar," lyricist Tim Rice hired a Cuban valet who always smoked a cigar. Tim had never even tried tobacco, but he found the aroma intriguing, even tempting. Noticing this, the servant lit one of his Havanas and offered it to his boss, saying, **"Smoke it, Señor Rice."** (Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore)

Yesterday I bowled two perfect games and a 200. Then I was off to the local racetrack where I drove my DeLorean five laps at 88 mph before remembering: **no lightning, no time travel.** Back to the bowling alley, where I bowled two more perfect games. Then it was time for me to call balls and strikes at the Nats game. Summary of my day: **800, five 88s, two 300s, Umpire!** (Gary Crockett)

Cajun chef Armand Boudreaux made food so good that people overlooked his odd ideas about light's effect on certain ingredients. Once, a new assistant complained, "Can we make it brighter in here? I can't even tell what I'm chopping." *"Mais non!"* replied Armand, holding up a few pods to the dimmed lightbulb. **"Dem okra, see? Dice in darkness!"** (Coleman Glenn)

***And Last:*** My late father won an old Style Invitational groaner contest.

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and he was so proud that he framed that page of The Post and displayed it in the family room. After he passed away, I decided he'd have liked it if I burned the column and added its ashes to his: **A pun he saved is a pun I urned.** (*Gary Crockett*)

**Still running — deadline Monday night, July 18:** Our contest to say why two items on our wacky list are similar or different. See [wapo.st/invite1496](http://wapo.st/invite1496).

**DON'T MISS AN INVITE!** [Sign up here](#) to receive a once-a-week email from the Empress as soon as The Style Invitational and Style Conversational go online every Thursday, complete with links to the columns.

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By [Pat Myers](#)

Pat Myers is the "Empress" of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's famed contest for clever, edgy, wacky humor and wordplay. In the role since 2003 – 900-plus contests ago – she writes the column and is its only judge. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. [Twitter](#)

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